

After Life on a Submarine, a Navy Veteran Takes up Earth Science

Michael Klaser moves from sonar to seismograph

When Michael Klaser enlisted in the Navy at the age of 17, he had two goals in mind. “I wanted to work hard, and go off on an adventure,” he said. “All I could think about was joining the Navy.”

Even with that ready-for-anything spirit, the Chicago-area native never dreamed that in a few short years he’d be helping guide a submarine through the waters of the Atlantic.

“There I was, 23-years-old and helping to supervise a multi-billion dollar submarine with nuclear missiles and 150 people aboard,” says Klaser, now a 30-year-old **School of Arts and Sciences** senior at Rutgers.

“It was just this huge amount of responsibility. I look back on it now and I’m just amazed and gratified I was able to do that.” Klaser served 10 years in the Navy, specializing in sophisticated Sonar technology aboard the USS Tennessee. When he left in 2012 with the goal of attending college, he knew he needed an undergraduate program with the vitality and vision to complement his formidable experience and skills.

“My education needed to be about something greater than showing up for class,” he said. “I really needed to work on something cutting edge and different.”

He found what he was looking for in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, where his maturity, skills, and can-do attitude soon earned him a spot on Professor Vadim Levin’s research team, employing seismographic data to probe the earth’s crust.

“I didn’t have to do much to make Michael into a first-rate seismic data analyst,” Levin says. “It was fascinating to observe how the skills he had learned while operating military equipment acquired new meaning for him.”

Klaser was thrilled to jump right into hands-on research as an undergraduate. He’s now considering attending graduate school or starting a career in energy exploration.

“Vadim has been just great,” he said. “He took me in, gave me my own little spot in the lab, and even brought me on a research expedition to northern Canada.”

Adding to an overall positive experience is the veteran-friendly Rutgers campus.

“I love going to Veteran’s House on Lafayette Street,” Klaser said. “When two veterans meet one other, they can relate and help each other. There is always trust.”

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